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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

THE PRANG COURSE OF INSTRUCTION IN FORM-STUDY AND DRAWING.



THE struggle for existence which is every day becoming more and more strenuous, the uneducated find themselves at a disadvantage compared with the educated, and it is a healthy sign of the times to see such people desiring for their children the acquisitions denied to themselves. This demand of the age for a wider range of study on the part of the youth of the country is having a most beneficial effect upon the science of pedagogy, and not a year passes without the engrafting of fresh educational methods upon the old and narrow system of reading, writing and arithmetic, which are only considered the primary stepping stones to a good education. Of all subjects of study for developing the natural powers, that of instruction in drawing has, until within the last few years, received the least attention of any. Pupils both in Europe and America have been taught the ancient and modern languages, music and natural philosophy, but the methods of instruction in drawing heretofore employed have been ludicrously crude and unsatisfactory. Drawing is still in many places neglected as unworthy of serious study and, excepting those schools where the Prang method is taught, it is only in private schools where the "drawing master" flourishes. We are glad to observe, however, that an art educational movement has taken place in the United States, and the Prang Course in Form-Study and Drawing, initiated by Mr. Louis Prang of Boston, has for nearly twenty years been extending over the country, all that time embodying the ripe knowledge and experience of the most eminent teachers who, during this period, have been most successful in teaching drawing in the public schools. We have received from the Prang Educational Company in Boston, specimen copies of the drawing books and manuals which at present represent the Prang Course of Instruction in Form-Study and Drawing. This unique and systematic course includes all the school years from the first primary class through the intermediate to the high schools. It is a system at once simple and natural, adapted to the plastic child's nature, and which appeals in the first instance to the senses of sight and touch. The old school method limited itself almost wholly to intellectual training and inward activity, but the Prang method in drawing requires observation by the hand and eye, feeling and seeing, and the exercise and development of the senses of touch and sight. The Prang method makes necessary the use and study of external objects and models from the very outset. It is stated that to-day about two millions of people are taught by this method, and the principal teachers and educators of the United States consider it the best and most rational of all systems. A branch of culture heretofore neglected has at a stroke been firmly established in the line of natural methodical progress which must prove one of the most powerful levers known in the history of educational methods. Prang's Shorter Course in Form-Study and Drawing is a course in drawing based upon the principles and methods of the Prang complete course of instruction in drawing which has produced excellent results in the leading schools of that city. The manual entitled "The Use of Models" is intended for the teacher's use during the first two primary years, and no regular drawing books are required for the use of the pupils during this period, their work in drawing being preferably done upon sheets of practice paper. In the first year's work the square, cube, cylinder, and various prisms, as models, are studied, and tablets and sticks are used in tablet and stick-laying exercises. These models are used by the pupils as well as by the teachers. When the scholars have made themselves familiar with their models, they are told how to study other objects similar in size and shape. The scholar's work consists chiefly in cultivating his organs of sense, and his perception of form is invariably obtained from models in real life and not from drawings or copies in the old masters' style. The work of the second year is of the same general character as that of the first year. The pupil is exercised in modelling simple objects, in tablet laying, paper cutting and elementary drawing. The underlying idea is that pupils should discover the properties of form with as little assistance on the part of the teacher as possible. The work of the third year includes objects of a spherical and cubical nature. Pupils are taught to find out by their own observation the facts and appearances of these objects, to tell by the aid of paper and drawing what they have discovered. Natural objects are considered for representation, as, the apple, the toadstool, the leaves of plants, etc., and in decorative arrangements there are zig-zag borders, the Greek cross, etc. In the fourth year the study is broadened and objects of a cylindrical character are studied. From solids geometric drawings are made, and leaves and other parts of plants are drawn. During the first four years of the Prang course, great stress is laid upon the developing of the observing powers through the study of things. This study awakens reflection, or thought, concerning the things observed,

and this thought finds expression by means of modelling and drawing. In the fifth year the cone and conical objects make their appearance, and the study of the appearance of objects—that is, the beginning of perspective—is taken up. The work of the pupils is grouped under three distinct yet correlated divisions, viz.: Construction, or the delineation of the facts of objects leading to working drawings. 2. Representation, or the delineation of the appearance of objects when seen as wholes, leading to pictorial representation. 3. Decoration, or the copying and designing of ornament for decorative purposes. It will be observed that this system of study causes the power of observation to be greatly increased through the cultivation of the senses of sight and touch, and rule and compasses being unused, skill in free-hand drawing has been developed. In the work of the latter school years instruction takes on a more practical form; the study of objects as regards that instruction, their appearance, and the development of ornament from plants or other forms is vigorously carried on, the work being intended for application in practical industry. Under the head of Decoration, the Prang course presents the elementary principles which should determine the selection, combination and idealization of both geometric and natural forms for practical use in the decorative arts. Historical forms of ornament are given, and the learner is taught how to use natural objects for the purpose of conventional design, according to the principles of æsthetics. Throughout the whole course of instruction there is an apparent earnest desire to inspire a love of beauty and to honestly educate public taste. The Prang course is, in fact, a step in practical pedagogics surpassing anything which has been done in this direction, either in Europe or America. A simple and natural method of instruction has been given to the study of drawing and the fundamental principles of constructive, pictorial and decorative drawing have been presented in their true relations. The student is left to depend more upon himself, and is therefore obliged to give his earnest attention and thought to the work in hand. Individuality, under such conditions, is free to develop its indescribable charm where otherwise too fixed and formal standards of personal instruction lead to a lifeless uniformity.

NEW UPHOLSTERY MATERIALS.

MESSRS. W. & J. SLOANE are at present exhibiting some choice novelties for the new season's upholstery trade. They have imported a splendid line of silk tapestry fabrics, a great many of which are their own private designs, and all are notable both for novelty of design and color. A beautiful all silk tapestry is spotted at wide intervals with an Egyptian floral pattern set upon a square shield, the motive having been discovered in an antique Egyptian tapestry in the South Kensington Museum. The prevailing tints in which the fabric is produced are old gold, ceramic and absinthe green. A beautiful tapestry, with a pattern suitable for church purposes, in cream and gold, blue and cream, and other brilliant combinations, is a notable feature of the exhibit. A fine specimen of brocatelle, which is made in Germany, reproduces the splendid effects of the Italian Renaissance. The colors are green and silver and pink and absinthe. There are some fine brocatelles that have large floral bouquets repeated at wide intervals that are suitable for the seats and backs of chairs, the prevailing colors being bouton d'or, acier, aurore, chartreuse and apricot. There are Empire tapestries in ceil blue and vieux rose that possess a magnificent lustre. There is an exquisite example of a broché tapestry, made by Van Bergen & Co., who considered it too fine a fabric for the Paris Exposition. The pattern consists of bouquets of flowers, in more than twenty colorings, embroidered upon the fabric. There is, perhaps, no finer example of a broché tapestry in existence. A silk moiré tapestry in cinnamon red, electric blue, prianon and Watteau tints, next charm us with its beautiful watered effects. There are also fine examples of cordonnet in rose and cream, and lampas in ceramic and vieille paille, all equally charming. In silk velours, the prevailing tints are toreador, camellia red, capote, Isabella, Mersey, and Cleopatra, the latter being a new and exquisite rose tint. The motive of the silk velour goods is a heraldic device not unlike the head of a spear having half a dozen curved prongs thereon. We must not forget to mention a beautiful tulip pattern in a silk tapestry, which reposes upon a heavy barba cloth made, of silk and wool, and styled "Rajah," as a convenient cognomen. The prevailing tints of the latter fabric are bronze, ceramic, toreador and capote blue. There is a beautiful example of a Daghestan tapestry, that is to say, the fabric accurately reproduces the pattern and colorings to be found in Daghestan rugs. Opposite this fabric we see another example of the gorgeous broché tapestry, heavily embroidered with silken flowers, the ground in two instances being dracena and vieille paille. A curious fabric, known as "skin tapestry," is an important feature of the exhibit. This consists of two different fabrics superimposed upon each other, the upper one being of extremely thin silk. They are held together by the pattern, which